

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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June 20, 2012
Start: 1:08 pm
Recess: 2:23 pm

HELD AT: 250 Broadway
Committee Room, 16th Floor

B E F O R E:

ROBERT JACKSON
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Stephen Levin
Fernando Cabrera
G. Oliver Koppell
Mark Weprin
Vincent Ignizio
Deborah Rose
Daniel Dromm
Karen Koslowitz
Brad Lander
Charles Barron
Lewis A. Fidler
Helen D. Foster
Jessica S. Lappin

A P P E A R A N C E S

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

James Vacca
Eric Ulrich
Margaret Chin
Daniel R. Garodnick

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Joel Berg
Executive Director
New York City Coalition Against Hunger

Matthew Nulty
President-Elect
Greater New York Dietetic Association

Mark Dunlea
Executive Director
Hunger Action Network of New York State

Triada Stampas
Senior Director of Government Relations
Food Bank for New York City

Louise Feld
Policy Associate for Food and Economic Security
Citizens' Committee for Children

Agnes Molner
Community Food Advocates

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Good

afternoon, everyone. Today is Wednesday, June 20th, 2012, it's approximately 1:08 p.m., and welcome to today's Education Committee hearing on consideration of Proposed Intro--Proposed Resolution number 910-A and Proposed Resolution 911-A.

Proposed Resolution 910-A calls on the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign legislation supporting Breakfast in the Classroom in every school in New York City.

Proposed Resolution number 911-A calls on the New York City Department of Education to support Breakfast in the Classroom in every school in New York City.

I just want to make a few opening remarks and then we'll move on to hear a statement from our colleague Steve Levin, lead sponsor of Proposed Resolutions 910-A and Proposed Resolutions 911-A. But before I begin, we've been joined by our colleagues Council Member Steve Levin to my right, along with Council Member Fernando Cabrera of the Bronx, and Council Member Oliver Koppell of the Bronx.

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2 Please, I want to let you know that
3 currently the New York City Council, we were in
4 budget negotiations and there's members in various
5 delegations and so members will be leaving and
6 coming and leaving, understanding that this is a
7 very important issue, but the most pressing issue
8 of the day right now is to deal with the City's
9 expense budget. So please be aware of that and
10 cognizant.

11 The Council's Education Committee
12 has held several hearings on the Department of
13 Education's School Food programs, including a
14 hearing focused on school breakfast in November
15 2008. And at that and subsequent hearings, we
16 learned that School Food is a major part of many
17 children's diets with many consuming as much as
18 half their daily calories at school. We also
19 learned that the number of students who eat
20 breakfast in school is far lower than the number
21 who eat school lunch.

22 According to the Department of
23 Education, as of January 2012, only 28.4% of
24 elementary school students, 15.4% of middle school
25 students, and 12.6% of high school students

1 participated in school breakfast programs. We all
2 heard that breakfast is the most important meal of
3 the day. Well this is even more true for students
4 who need to start their day with a nutritious
5 breakfast to be able to focus on listening and
6 learning throughout the day in class. And to help
7 increase participation in school breakfast
8 programs, in 2003, the Department of Education
9 initiated its Universal Free Breakfast program
10 enabling all children to get a nutritious meal,
11 breakfast, in school at no charge regardless of
12 their income.
13

14 Although Universal Free Breakfast
15 increased participation somewhat, advocates urge
16 the Department of Education to do more. And in
17 2008, the Department of Education began a pilot, a
18 Breakfast in the Classroom program, in 48 schools.
19 And since that time, Breakfast in the Classroom
20 programs have been expanded to a total of 381 city
21 schools this year. According to information on
22 the Department of Education's website, not only
23 has Breakfast in the Classroom increased
24 participation in the school breakfast program in
25 the schools where it is in use, it has also

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2 resulted in more students paying attention in
3 class, more students showing up to school on time,
4 and fewer visits to the school nurse's office, and
5 there are also videos touting the benefits of
6 Breakfast in the Classroom on DOE's website in
7 which principals and other school staff claim that
8 the program creates unity and a sense of community
9 in the classroom and it improved student
10 performance and attendance while reducing
11 tardiness. So it seems like it's a win-win
12 situation, clearly.

13 Despite this ringing endorsement
14 from participating schools, the Department of
15 Education has apparently abandoned plans to expand
16 the Breakfast in the Classroom program, citing
17 concerns about childhood obesity and fears that
18 some students are eating two breakfasts--at home
19 or on the way to school, as well as eating
20 Breakfast in the Classroom.

21 Childhood obesity is a major
22 concern, which is why I and many of my colleagues
23 have urged the Department of Education to provide
24 adequate physical education to all students as
25 required by New York State regulations, but

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2 feeding kids who are hungry, healthy meals is also
3 a great concern, especially when I hear that some
4 students may not get to lunch until very late in
5 the day.

6 We have heard some concerns from
7 custodians union that Breakfast in the Classroom
8 increases the workload for custodial staff who
9 must clean classrooms and take out trash and that
10 it may increase the number of rodents, roaches,
11 and other pests in our schools. Union officials
12 say they are not opposed to Breakfast in the
13 Classroom but are concerned about increased
14 workload, given that the custodial budget has been
15 cut several times in the past few years, resulting
16 in a reduction in custodial staffing, especially
17 school cleaners. However, advocates point out
18 that Breakfast in the Classroom has been found to
19 be the most successful strategy to increase school
20 breakfast participation nationwide, therefore,
21 advocates would like to see the Breakfast in the
22 Classroom program expanded to all schools,
23 approximately 1,700.

24 Today, we would like to get
25 feedback on Proposed Resolution 910-A and Proposed

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2 Resolution number 911-A. The Committee usually
3 hears testimony from the Department of Education
4 at the beginning of each hearing, however, the
5 current administration has a policy of not
6 commenting on resolutions so we will go directly
7 to testimony from invited witnesses and members of
8 the public. And everyone who wishes to testify
9 today must fill out a witness slip, which is
10 located at the desks of the Sergeant-at-Arms near
11 the entrance of the room. And please indicate on
12 the witness slip whether you are here to testify
13 in favor or in opposition to the resolution, or if
14 you don't have a position, that's okay too, this
15 ain't one way or the other.

16 I want to point out, however, that
17 we will not be voting on the resolutions today as
18 this is just the first hearing. To allow as many
19 as possible to testify, testimony will be limited
20 to three minutes per person, so if you have any
21 written testimony, please don't read it in detail,
22 summarize the contents.

23 And now, without further ado, we
24 were joined by our colleague Mark Weprin of Queens
25 to my left, our colleague Vincent Ignizio was

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2 here, he's a member of the Council from Staten
3 Island, and as I indicated to you before, members
4 will be coming in and out because of budget
5 negotiations.

6 So without further ado, let me turn
7 to our colleague Steve Levin from Brooklyn for his
8 remarks regarding Proposed Resolution 910-A and
9 911-A. And we've been joined by our colleague
10 from Staten Island, Debbie Rose. Council Member
11 Levin?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you
13 very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for
14 holding this hearing today on Proposed Resolutions
15 910-A and 911-A, 910 calls on the New York City
16 Department of Education to mandate Breakfast in
17 the Classroom in every school New York City; 911-A
18 calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass
19 and the Governor to sign legislation requiring all
20 public schools to serve breakfast in a classroom.

21 I think that it is widely accepted
22 that breakfast, school breakfasts for children who
23 need it across New York City has a myriad of
24 benefits. The academic performance of children
25 who have eaten breakfast increases dramatically.

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2 Studies have shown that eating breakfast can
3 improve math, reading, and standardized test
4 scores, as well as improving attentiveness.
5 Providing breakfast to students at schools
6 improves their concentration, alertness,
7 comprehension, memory, and learning, and studies
8 show that children who skip breakfast have a
9 slower memory recall, make more errors, and have
10 an increased likelihood of having to repeat a
11 grade.

12 From a nutritional and health
13 perspective, research suggests that the children
14 who have a school breakfast program available
15 consume a better overall diet, consume a lower
16 percentage of calories from fat, are less likely
17 to have low serum levels of Vitamin C and Vitamin
18 B-9. Children who eat school breakfast consume a
19 lower percentage of calories from fat, less added
20 sugar, more fiber, more Vitamin C, and more
21 calcium than children who do not eat school
22 breakfast, and skipping breakfast has been linked
23 to a greater body fat and weight problems. In
24 addition, schools that take part in the school
25 breakfast program are required to meet federal

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nutritional standards.

The impacts on behavior are notable as well. Serving breakfast in the classroom can help reduce tardiness and absences and help children behave better. Absenteeism is a huge issue in New York City. Last year, in 12 of New York City's 32 school districts, well over 25% of primary school children were chronically absent from school, missing more than 10% of the school year. Breakfast participation currently is, to be frank, falls short of standards here in New York City. A report released this year by the Food Research and Action Center, which for disclosure purposes, was prepared by my cousin Madelyn Levin, notes that--and I want, for the record, this to be listed, in terms of levels of children who qualify for free or reduced lunch--and I'll just make this very quick, but for the record, for free or reduced lunch, I'm going to rank here the cities in the United States from 1 to 30 that participate in school breakfast. Newark, Detroit, Houston, District of Columbia, Boston, Columbus, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Memphis, Oklahoma City, San Diego, Los Angeles, Chicago,

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2 Omaha, Baltimore, Little Rock, Seattle, Prince
3 George's County, DeKalb County, Orlando, Miami,
4 Dallas, Denver, Oakland, and last, New York City.
5 That is unacceptable. We cannot go year after
6 year either dead last or close to last in terms of
7 the percentage of children having access to
8 breakfast when we know that the benefits are
9 there.

10 And just as a last note, I did
11 bring with me a fruit cup and some nuts and a cup
12 of coffee, which I don't recommend that coffee be
13 served in our schools, but I'm not making a mess,
14 I'm able to clean up very cleanly after myself and
15 I'm not disrupting the hearing by eating a small
16 meal while we're conducting this hearing. It's
17 doable, it happens in other cities, it is a
18 possible thing for us to achieve, and it is a
19 worthy goal.

20 I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for
21 conducting the hearing today, and I thank all the
22 advocates for coming out.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well thank
24 you, Council Member Levin, and I didn't even
25 notice that you were eating or my colleague Mark

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2 Weprin and I know that with our schedule we have
3 to eat when we can and, clearly, we know that in
4 the morning breakfast is one of the most--is the
5 most important meal in order to give our bodies--

6 [Crosstalk]

7 MALE VOICE: --it wasn't free.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: --the energy
9 that we need in order to focus.

10 We've also been joined by our
11 colleagues Danny Dromm of Queens and Karen
12 Koslowitz of Queens.

13 I had mentioned earlier that the
14 three minutes, advocates will be given five
15 minutes and members of the general public will be
16 given three. So with that, let's turn to our
17 first panel, Joel Berg, he is with the New York
18 City Coalition Against Hunger, and obviously, he
19 left off the E-R, so obviously that our children
20 are hungry, Joel. And also Matthew Nutly, Greater
21 New York Dietetic Association, and Mark Dunler?

22 MARK DUNLEA: Dunlea.

23 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Dunlea?
24 Okay. Hunger Action Network.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Anybody else has

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[Crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: So, Joel, I noticed that you had left off the E-R in Hunger so--

[Crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: --I figured you left it off because you were hungry.

JOEL BERG: Sorry, perhaps, although fighting hunger starts at home. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm Joel Berg, I'm Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, I'm testifying on behalf of the 1.5 million New Yorkers who live in homes that can't afford enough food, and that, according to USDA numbers, includes 500,000 children--1 in 4 New York City children, according to the federal government, live in homes that can't afford enough food. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing; thank you, Councilman Levin, for being the prime force behind these resolutions, which, not shockingly, we strongly support.

I understand when we disagree with the administration on ideology. I understand when

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2 there's a disagreement over budgets because, after
3 all, finances are finite. I do not understand
4 when there should be an issue where there are no
5 ideological differences, where the weight of data
6 is so overwhelmingly compelling in one side, why
7 an extreme out of the mainstream position, really
8 a cockamamie position, that school breakfast
9 somehow increases obesity has gotten the City to
10 stop promoting in-classroom breakfast. Now as you
11 guys know, when the City wants to look good
12 compared to another city, they will tout all live
13 long day how we're supposedly doing better than
14 other cities, but when a study shows we're dead
15 last, oh, the study's wrong, we never hear why the
16 study is wrong, but the study is wrong.

17 Yet even the Department of Health
18 has said 80% of the kids eligible for school
19 breakfast in the city are not getting it. We have
20 a massive hunger crisis, you'll hear from my
21 colleagues that there's oodles of evidence. The
22 single greatest way to increase obesity, increase
23 obesity is for kids to skip meals and so we know
24 providing breakfast actually reduces obesity and
25 we also know we have a hunger crisis with 1 out of

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2 4 children in New York City not having enough to
3 eat.

4 Now the problem starts with this
5 administration never acknowledging that there's a
6 hunger crisis in New York City. When the Mayor
7 talks about it, he says, oh, people struggling,
8 blah, blah, blah, he never uses the word hunger.
9 HRA actually took the word hunger out of its food
10 and hunger hotline title. So when they start with
11 the assumption that hunger is not a problem, no
12 wonder they don't look at the solution. They had
13 two microscopic studies, never peer reviewed, one
14 of them in New York City, some schools on one day,
15 they never isolated out the schools that have in-
16 classroom breakfast in every classroom versus
17 some. And guess what, the Philadelphia study
18 found there's no statistically significant
19 difference between kids who have more than one
20 breakfast and no breakfast or one breakfast. So
21 the very study that the Department of Health is
22 citing claiming that maybe, sort of, kind of, in
23 some blue moon scenario, having an extra breakfast
24 would increase obesity, even their own study
25 doesn't show that. The two studies they did did

1 not even ask about hunger and food insecurity.

2 Let me repeat that. Their two studies on school
3 breakfast did not even consider their impact on
4 hunger and food insecurity.
5

6 The example I give is if you're
7 doing a study of the impact of chemotherapy and
8 all you study is whether occasionally it increases
9 nausea, but you don't even ask whether it
10 decreases cancer, that's the same lack of common
11 sense you study an intervention, you totally
12 ignore the main purpose of the intervention and
13 then study some odd potential, wild side effect.

14 Since they're not here to testify,
15 I'll give you their two main reasons for opposing
16 this. Now depending on the days, whether they
17 even admit to opposing this or not, but they've
18 told us they're not encouraging anymore and the
19 facts speak for themselves: Not only are we dead
20 last, less than 4% of the kids in New York City
21 public schools get in-classroom breakfast. They
22 claim it causes, may, sort of, kind of cause
23 obesity, it doesn't, in fact, providing a healthy,
24 nutritious breakfast which is now easier than ever
25 under the improved USDA guidelines, reduces

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2 obesity, and the one most ridiculous claim is we
3 don't tell principals what to do. Mr. Chairman,
4 you've been battling with the Department of
5 Education longer--I don't want to date you--for
6 quite a while. You know they tell the principals
7 what to do each and every day on a thousand
8 different items. I asked the Department of
9 Education recently, are school safety, food safety
10 guidelines optional by a principal, they go, oh,
11 oh, of course not. Then don't tell me
12 everything's optional for a principal, they don't
13 make it optional whether they do stop and frisk
14 with their metal detectors, they don't make it
15 optional whether they have the new curriculum for
16 sexual health, they don't make 1,000 things
17 optional, claiming they're leaving it up to the
18 principals is nothing short of a copout. You know
19 when they wanted to end social promotion, they
20 didn't have a vote, and in fact, when their
21 educational board was against it, the Mayor fired
22 them. This idea that it's a democracy in every
23 single public school and that's the reason they
24 couldn't possibly tell principals to feed hungry
25 people--and by the way, they're losing \$50 million

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2 a year in federal reimbursements, and that's my
3 last three seconds. It's crazy.

4 MALE VOICE: Tell us how you really
5 feel.

6 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well tell us
7 how you really feel. Thank you. Next, please?

8 MATTHEW NULTY: Good afternoon, my
9 name is Matthew Nulty and I am here representing
10 the Greater New York Dietetic Association. I am
11 this year's president-elect and I am representing
12 a membership of 700 registered dieticians and
13 diatetic technicians in the New York City area,
14 and this includes professionals from all different
15 backgrounds working in most namely hospitals,
16 universities, food service management
17 organizations, and especially schools.

18 So I am here to place my--represent
19 my organization in saying that's Breakfast in the
20 Classroom is something that registered dietitians
21 do support. We are the leading nutrition experts
22 in the country and we are the affiliate of the
23 Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, formerly known
24 as the American Dietetic Association.

25 Breakfast in the classroom has been

1
2 shown to increase participation in school
3 breakfasts and is associated with reducing obesity
4 and hunger. One in four children in New York City
5 are living food insecure in food insecure homes
6 with little access to healthy, affordable food,
7 and hunger impacts children's ability to focus
8 throughout the day.

9 Beginning each day with Breakfast
10 in the Classroom will improve academic
11 performance, reduce tardiness, and reduce visits
12 to the nurse's office. We have also had a problem
13 with childhood obesity, and about 21% of New York
14 City children K through 8 are obese. Many
15 children have indicated that Breakfast in the
16 Classroom--or many studies have indicated that
17 giving children breakfast in the classroom has a
18 favorable effect on reducing weight among
19 children.

20 We kindly ask that the New York
21 City Department of Education, Mr. Chairman and
22 Councilman Levin, we thank you for your support,
23 and the Greater New York Dietetic Association
24 fully supports this resolution and we hope that it
25 will pass. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

Next, please?

MARK DUNLEA: Hi, my name is Mark Dunlea and I'm Executive Director of the Hunger Action Network of New York State. I'm also the co-chair of the Policy Committee of the Food Systems Network here in New York City, as well as a member of the Policy Committee of the Brooklyn Food Coalition, both which are also supportive of the issue of expanding participation in the school breakfast program.

We represent, like Joel represents the food pantries and soup kitchens here in New York City, we represent them statewide as well as New York City, and I've worked for the Hunger Action Network for 26 years, we've had an office in New York City for about 20 of those years. But I only moved to New York City three years ago and so I was rather shocked a couple years ago when I read the FRAC report that indicated New York City was among the worst, and this year, the worst, among the large cities in the United States in terms of participation in the federal school breakfast program. And I said, how could that

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2 possibly be because I've heard of all this
3 positive feedback, both about the Universal Free
4 Breakfast program, but particularly about the
5 Breakfast in the Classroom program, how can we
6 have these great innovations and New York still
7 rank--New York City still rank last among the
8 large cities. And that's when I discovered that,
9 in fact, that the Breakfast in the Classroom
10 program was voluntary and not a mandate and, in
11 fact, the vast majority of school districts were
12 schools do not participate in the Breakfast in the
13 Classroom program and even in schools that do, the
14 principals have signed off on the Breakfast in the
15 Classroom program, it's also optional, so in many
16 case may only be a small percentage of the actual
17 classrooms. And that's ah-ha, you know, that is
18 why New York can have these great programs, but
19 not have very good participation.

20 And one of the things that the FRAC
21 report pointed out, that if New York City could a
22 little more than double the participation in the
23 school breakfast program, it would generate an
24 extra \$50 million a year in federal
25 reimbursements. And \$50 million even in a big

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2 city like New York City would seem to be something
3 that would be worthwhile to help out the
4 taxpayers.

5 Joel talked about some of the
6 numbers with respect to hunger. Almost 40% of the
7 people that we feed at the food pantries and soup
8 kitchens are children. According to USDA
9 nationally, about 500,000 children in New York
10 City live in households that are at risk of going
11 hunger. One would think that the City would do
12 everything it possibly could to maximize
13 participation in these programs in order to reduce
14 hunger. And then I was quite surprised a couple
15 of weeks ago, I mean, to be honest, I'd been
16 somewhat impressed by some of the initiatives that
17 Mayor Bloomberg has taken around healthy foods--
18 the Health Buck program, [off mic] these programs
19 often with the support and leadership of the City
20 Council, but Health Bucks and Green Card and
21 Healthy Bodegas, and so I was surprised when he
22 came out and said that participation in the school
23 breakfast program might be a contributor to
24 obesity. You know, that seems, you know, like an
25 urban myth, you know, I am not seeing any studies

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2 to back that up and, in fact, the opposite, there
3 have been quite a few studies that show
4 participation in the school breakfast program
5 reduces obesity, and we do provide links to some
6 of those studies in our testimony, which I won't
7 go into detail here. But I do notice that both
8 the White House task force on childhood obesity
9 and two recent Institute of Medicine committees
10 have both recommended that one of the strategies
11 to reduce childhood obesity is to increase
12 participation in the federal nutrition programs
13 like school breakfast. And so why the Mayor feels
14 that we should be going in an opposite, you know,
15 direction is, frankly, I don't really understand.

16 So I really want to commend the
17 City Council for supporting this and particularly
18 Council Member Levin for bringing this issue to
19 the table. It's long overdue. You know, we
20 worked back in '93, the Hunger Action Network, to
21 help pass the state legislation to make the school
22 breakfast program basically mandatory statewide,
23 you already had it, to your credit, here in New
24 York City, and I really hope that New York City
25 once again can take leadership.

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2 And I do cite in here DC, I
3 believe, was the first city that passed a
4 resolution for mandating school breakfast
5 participation and they showed a very significant
6 increase in the school breakfast program. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
9 We've been joined by additional colleagues Brad
10 Lander, in front, from Brooklyn, along with our
11 colleague Charles Barron of Brooklyn to my left,
12 Lew Fidler--I mentioned you before, didn't I,
13 Mark? I did.

14 [Crosstalk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: --list of
16 questions, you know--

17 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Very
18 good.

19 [Crosstalk]

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Our colleague
21 Lew Fidler from Brooklyn, and also we were joined
22 by our colleague Helen Diane Foster of the Bronx,
23 who obviously, had to go to delegation meetings,
24 so she popped in to say she was here.

25 FEMALE VOICE: For the record.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: And for the
3 record, we've received testimony from Local 372
4 President Santos Crespo Jr, he is a DC 37 Local
5 372 represent school employees.

6 So with that, you want questions on
7 this, Mark?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay.
10 Council Member Weprin has the floor.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Gentlemen,
12 good to see you. Mark I've known for many, many,
13 many, many, many years. But anyway, I don't know
14 if you're the right people to ask these, but are
15 any of you particularly familiar with what New
16 York City is doing specifically, like, how it's
17 working in the classroom?

18 JOEL BERG: Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: You all
20 pretty comfortable with that? 'Cause I honestly
21 don't know the answers to these questions, that's
22 why I'm asking them, but so, I mean, I knew they
23 were serving free breakfasts and in most of the
24 schools I have been dealing with, you go to the
25 cafeteria, you get there early and you got to go

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to the cafeteria and very few kids were taking advantage of that, I admit that. Just can you describe to me how it works? So you're an elementary school child, you go to your first class, and then what happens?

JOEL BERG: Thank you for the question. There are two models of how it works: What we call classic in-classroom breakfast or grab-and-go. They tend to use grab-and-go a little more in the older grades when they do it, and so grab-and-go is they literally have the breakfast in the hallway and students who want it, grab it, and bring it into the school--into the classroom and then eat it there. For other in-classroom breakfast, the School Food service folks would actually bring a cart or deliver in some way, shape, or form the food to the first period classroom, the kids would all come in and eat it at the same time, it generally takes a few minutes. In some instances, teachers actually combine it with instruction, they may do a fractions discussion around it or nutrition or geography where the food is from. Most of the teachers I've spoken to enjoy it very much, not

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2 only because they know that kids who are not well
3 fed cannot be well read, and you got to be fueled
4 to be schooled--those are my two rhymes for the
5 day--but they also see just in terms of
6 acclimating to the day, it gets the students ready
7 to the day. One principal in the Bronx told me
8 that they used to have 55 kids a day coming to
9 school late and now they have 5.

10 So I know the UFT has supported it
11 and many, many teachers have support it, many
12 principals have tried it, have supported it. I've
13 seen it personally working in a number of schools
14 and it's been extraordinarily well received. And
15 by the way, Newark's done it for years, Chicago is
16 moving towards it, Houston is doing it, LA is
17 doing it. This idea that somehow New York City is
18 sui generis and we're the only place on the planet
19 it can't work is ridiculous.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: I don't
21 know how much time they're going to give me, so
22 let me just ask another questions. What do the
23 breakfasts look like, what are they?

24 JOEL BERG: First of all, USDA, for
25 something to be a reimbursed meal, there are a

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2 number of required components, so there's a milk
3 component, let's now, you know, fat-free milk, I
4 believe, there's a juice or fruit component, and
5 there's some sort of either protein requirement,
6 that's often cheese or yogurt, and some sort of
7 grain requirement. USDA recently improved the
8 quality of those meals, so I do think they're
9 going to be further improving the nutritional
10 content shortly.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: And then it
12 was mentioned by the Chairman that, you know, 20%
13 of kids were taking advantage of this breakfast,
14 do we have the numbers of how many kids who come
15 to school do eat breakfast at home, what
16 percentage?

17 JOEL BERG: We do not. Although I
18 just will say, the way that DOE is doing, only a
19 few schools when they do do it in classroom, the
20 breakfasts, do it in every classroom, most, they
21 do it in some, not others.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right.

23 JOEL BERG: And I'd say if their
24 biggest concern is obesity, their own policy is
25 making it worse because if you do it--

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COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right.

JOEL BERG: --in first grade and third grade, how in the world is a parent going to know. And, too, is--

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right.

JOEL BERG: --is a parent really going to feed one kid but not the other.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: I'm not arguing the obesity argument, although, you know, in my son's school, at least the experience I had is that, I mean, most of the kids in my son's school were eating breakfast at home in some capacity or another and so they chose, I don't want to go early and go--we go early and get breakfast. Some of them probably would eat a second breakfast, I'm not sure how bad it would be if it was a piece of fruit and other things, I don't know, you know, it depends on what it is. But I just, you know, I'm not sure how comfortable I am in classroom time people eating a meal, you're saying it's only a few minutes, obviously, eating quickly is not healthy either, but, you know, so I don't know, it just seems to me, you know, that there is some concern in the idea of

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2 just using up more classroom time, we use up
3 enough already, you know, prepping for
4 standardized tests, taking standardized tests, and
5 doing everything else, where most of the school
6 year is lost already and that's why the schools
7 are going down, in my opinion. But just saying is
8 it help--I mean, I just think is it--I'm concerned
9 a little bit about that, the idea of wasting class
10 time, is that--your experience has been it's only
11 a couple of minutes and doesn't take away from
12 lessons at all.

13 MARK DUNLEA: Well I think you also
14 it's primarily in the homeroom period so that's
15 usually not, [off mic] seeing more for an
16 announcements--

17 [Crosstalk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN:
19 [Interposing] I know in elementary school they
20 don't really have a homeroom, that--

21 MARK DUNLEA: Right.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: --doesn't
23 start until middle school, but--

24 MARK DUNLEA: [Interposing] Right.
25 And you know, I know my son went to school, he had

1
2 the opposite problem, he would not eat in the
3 morning when he got up, he said basically he
4 didn't feel it--it was discomfort for him to eat
5 that early in the morning and so some students--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN:

7 [Interposing] Right, that's bad parenting, you
8 know--

9 [Crosstalk]

10 MARK DUNLEA: Well we tried, we did
11 send him to school with his own, you know, little
12 bag, but, you know, he would prefer to eat a
13 little bit later in the day--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Understood.

15 MARK DUNLEA: --you had when you
16 get to the school, it may be better for the child.

17 MATTHEW NULTY: And if I might add
18 something, I've worked with New York City School
19 Food and they've been under the leadership of Chef
20 Jorge for a while now and they--New York City
21 School Food feeds the most people second to the
22 army and they have so much purchasing power in the
23 market that the quality of the food, the school
24 lunch especially--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right.

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2 MATTHEW NULTY: --has gone up
3 dramatically so that even though people are eating
4 at home, they may not be eating the most
5 nutritionally sound foods, they may be getting
6 things at a cart on the street. So this
7 guarantees that they're getting nutritionally
8 sound meals in school and not, you know, just
9 depending on what they may be getting at home.

10 JOEL BERG: If I may, just one more
11 answer to that--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN:
13 [Interposing] Just quickly 'cause I know Chairman
14 Jackson hates when I ask too many questions.

15 JOEL BERG: Council, is that,
16 number one, is there's ample evidence from other
17 districts that have done this around the country,
18 once this is done in every classroom that it's
19 advertised to parents, they stop feeding children
20 at home, and in fact, the undersecretary of USDA,
21 the deputy undersecretary in charge of these
22 programs who was head of the School Food Service
23 Association, basically the trade association of
24 School Food around the country, attested to that
25 in a recent meeting with us. We have preliminary

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2 data that in-classroom breakfast schools have
3 higher performance on certain standardized math
4 tests as well as clearly a lower absentee and a
5 lower tardiness. If you've been in a homeroom
6 classroom, very rarely do they start exactly in
7 time, kids are getting ready, they're unpacking.
8 Teachers say this acclimates kids into the school,
9 so I'd argue strongly this is good educational as
10 well as anti-hunger--

11 [Crosstalk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN:

13 [Interposing] You know, another problem I've seen
14 in schools is at lunch, very often kids don't eat
15 lunch in school for a number of reasons. First,
16 they might be a hot lunch kid who feels like it's
17 a stigma to go and get the hot lunch line, or they
18 just want to get out on the playground right away
19 and just say, you know what, I'll skip lunch. I
20 mean, I see that a lot in my son's schools. Why
21 don't we serve lunch in the classroom as well?

22 JOEL BERG: Well you do have--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Then we
24 wouldn't even need cafeterias.

25 JOEL BERG: I can't attest to what

1
2 you've seen with your own eyes, I will say
3 statistically that lunch participation is far,
4 far, far greater than breakfast participation. It
5 certainly decreases the older the students get as
6 the stigma becomes greater, you know, there are
7 open campuses, people go out for meals, but I
8 forget the statistics, but particularly in
9 elementary schools, a very high percentage of the
10 kids eligible for school lunch actually do eat it.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Right. No,
12 I'm sure it's higher that eat in school lunch than
13 breakfast, I'm sure there's a large percentage of
14 kids who actually do eat breakfast at home though,
15 outside the Dunlea household.

16 JOEL BERG: There are, but we don't
17 have statistics for New York City, but we do have
18 statistics nationwide, I don't have it right in
19 front of me, I can provide it to you, Councilman,
20 that very large numbers of American young people
21 have no breakfast whatsoever.

22 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you,
23 Council Member.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

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2 We've been joined by additional colleagues, as I
3 indicated, many of us are--all of us are in budget
4 negotiations, Jessica Lappin, our colleague from
5 Manhattan is in front of me, Jimmy Vacca of the
6 Bronx also is in front, Eric Ulrich to my left
7 from Queens is here. And with that, let me turn
8 Council Member Levin, followed by Council Member
9 Lander. Council Member Levin?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chairman. So I just want to, actually, I have
12 the menus in front of me for grab-and-go for this
13 month so I could tell you that yesterday was
14 orange juice and cream cheese bagel, Monday was
15 seasonal fresh fruit, variety of fruit yogurts,
16 and a honey graham cracker, and today is seasonal
17 fresh fruit, sunrise banana bread, and mozzarella
18 string cheese, so nutritious ways to start the
19 morning, they're not--you know, this isn't, you
20 know, full of carbs and empty calories.

21 One question that I would like to
22 ask Mr. Nulty about, you know, because I got to be
23 honest with you, you know, I asked the
24 commissioner of the Department of Health, Dr.
25 Farley, at the Health department's budget hearing

1
2 this year about this issue and, you know, they're
3 firmly committed to the idea that Breakfast in the
4 Classroom or I guess, I mean, it's unclear to me
5 whether they are looking at all school breakfast
6 that's having this effect or whether it's just
7 Breakfast in the Classroom, but they're firmly
8 committed to sticking to the line that it
9 increases--that it leads to double breakfasting
10 and increases obesity among New York City
11 schoolchildren. You're a health professional,
12 they're health professionals, can you just fill me
13 in a little bit on the status of this debate among
14 health professionals because--

15 MATTHEW NULTY: Sure.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: --I mean,
17 really we can't all be right and they seem to be
18 taking this position that I think is outside of
19 the mainstream, I don't know, I mean, I'd ask you.

20 MATTHEW NULTY: That's a good
21 point, thank you for bringing that up. There
22 could be the chance that people are having both
23 breakfast in school and at home, but I think the
24 issue that we're calling into question here is
25 what exactly is the quality of the food that

1
2 they're getting at home, is it nutritionally
3 sound, is it not. And considering students do
4 spend a large portion of their day in school and
5 the development between, you know, birth through,
6 I would say even 25 years old, is crucial--the
7 foods you're eating at that time are crucial, the
8 way to guarantee that people are getting the right
9 foods that they need is through programs like
10 school breakfast and school lunch. Students are
11 sometimes dropped off at 7 o'clock in the morning
12 and they don't leave the school sometimes 'til 6
13 o'clock, depending on if they have an after school
14 program or something, and I know in the summer
15 they've been offering a supper program to people
16 who don't normally get the chance to have supper.

17 So there's definitely a need and I
18 think that even though double breakfasting may be
19 happening, I think that, just from listening, you
20 know, listing the breakfast that you just, you
21 know, said before, I can't think of many people in
22 New York City that are giving their children fruit
23 every morning for breakfast. And studies have
24 shown that if you give people options, if you give
25 children options, they will eat them, they'll be

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more likely to eat them.

So I think, yes, double
breakfasting may be an issue, but I think it's
about getting a nutritionally balanced diet
throughout the day and increasing the likelihood
that students will be exposed to those different
types of foods and it won't just be, you know,
high fat foods or high carbohydrate foods.

MARK DUNLEA: One thing that I did
want to just quickly add, on the back of our
testimony, we included two pages from a fact sheet
produced by the Food Research Action Center and it
has about seven or eight different sections with
respect to how school breakfast may reduce
childhood obesity and I did not include the other
two pages of footnotes that substantiate each
point that they made, but that's readily available
on their website.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.
'Cause I mean, my concern is this, that the
Department of Education has essentially deferred
to the Department of Health on this matter and the
Department of Health, under this administration
has basically zero interest in kind of changing

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2 that position and so it's a--I mean, I think that
3 that's one reason why we find ourselves here today
4 considering resolutions on the matter is that I
5 think that this Council, under the leadership of
6 Speaker Quinn, who has been an advocate, strong
7 advocate, on this issue for many years, before I
8 ever came to the Council, and so I think, you
9 know, part of the problem that we're facing right
10 now is that we have an administration that doesn't
11 seem to be too willing to bend on the issue.

12 Now they have earlier this year put
13 out postcards to, I think they put out 700,000
14 postcards and have seen an increase or an uptick
15 of about 4% in school breakfast participation, but
16 it--and some of that is through Breakfast in the
17 Classroom or grab-and-go, but not all of it.

18 Okay. Thank you very much for your
19 testimony and for your support of these two pieces
20 of legislation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
22 Council Member Brad Lander of Brooklyn.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you
24 very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Council
25 Member Levin for sponsoring these resolutions, I'd

1
2 like to be happy as a co-sponsor to both of them.
3 Thank you for the testimony.

4 I guess a couple of things and then
5 a question. First, I'm concerned that people have
6 been reading too much Lord of the Rings because,
7 as far as I'm--as I know the hobbits are the only
8 one who institutionally have a second breakfast,
9 so I don't know whether that's influenced people's
10 thinking here a little, and they are overweight,
11 admittedly, a lot of the hobbits. But outside of
12 the hobbits, I haven't experienced it as a big
13 public health crisis that people are having
14 elevenses, as the hobbits call it.

15 One comment I would make about the,
16 that I think what you said about the experience
17 that teachers and principals have where they've
18 done it is right on, I have talked to some
19 teachers and principals that have done this and
20 they feel enthusiastic about it, but I've also
21 talked to a lot of teachers and principals in
22 schools that aren't doing it who have the
23 anxieties that Council Member Weprin articulated,
24 that believe it's going to be a mess, it's going
25 to take time away from teaching. And so I think

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2 having some more teacher and principal ambassadors
3 from the New York City schools that are doing this
4 who are, you know, explaining the experience
5 they've had, partly from a nutritional point of
6 view and that the kids are able to be more
7 attentive, but partly from a don't worry, you
8 know, it really isn't a big burden would be
9 helpful. So I'm not sure what the form of that
10 is, but I think if we could collaborate on that,
11 it would help a lot 'cause there is this sort of
12 first reaction there.

13 And then I have a couple questions
14 about some information and data. As you've noted,
15 DOE School Food has been taking some very good
16 steps. At the budget hearing with the DOE a
17 couple of weeks ago, I asked them some questions
18 to give us more data on a few things they've done
19 recently, they applied for and got this great
20 community eligibility provision so more schools
21 will be able to have universal school meals based
22 on community eligibility, they got a Medicaid
23 direct enrollment so more kids who are in families
24 that are getting Medicaid will be able to enroll
25 directly. But it's not clear to me how those are

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2 related to the schools that were dropped from
3 Provision 2 universal school meals a couple of
4 years ago. So I guess two questions, one is, in
5 any of the places that you're familiar with around
6 the country where maybe they do something short of
7 universal breakfast in the classrooms, is there
8 anyplace that does Breakfast in the Classroom, at
9 least in the schools that are either Provision 2
10 or community eligibility, those seem like the
11 schools where kids would be most likely not to be
12 getting a nutritious breakfast so that might be a
13 good starting place for expanding the pilot.

14 And then my second question is, you
15 talked about some of the data that's available and
16 what we know, and I guess if you could just help
17 us understand what information and data is
18 available on, you know, how many breakfasts, how
19 many lunches are kids eating and what nutritional,
20 you know, quality and value they're getting out of
21 it, I think would be helpful to us both in trying
22 to make sure as many kids as possible are getting
23 good breakfast and good lunches.

24 MATTHEW NULTY: Well I can just
25 speak quickly to knowing what the nutritional

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value is. Like--

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: [Interposing]

You can just identify yourself so that whoever is recording this can separate out who's who--

MATTHEW NULTY: Oh.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: --thanks.

MATTHEW NULTY: For me.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: For all three of you talking.

MATTHEW NULTY: Oh, okay, thank you. This is Matthew Nulty from the Greater New York Dietetic Association. To speak to what Mr. Berg was talking about before, the USDA sets strict guidelines to reimbursement, so the nutritional quality of the meal is standardized and all of that, you know, all that information about the nutrition facts labels, everything is available through the United States Department of Agriculture and all of its, you know, affiliates so...

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: But they're, I mean, as you mentioned, the quality of the--the nutritional quality of DOE's meals has improved significantly in recent years, but the

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2 old ones were meeting the USDA standards and the
3 new ones are meeting the USDA standards, so it
4 does matter a little bit what School Food is--and,
5 you know, we got rid of the chocolate milks and so
6 there have been improvements in what DOE is doing
7 that are more fine grained than what's required by
8 USDA. So what--and, you know, I think a lot of us
9 want to keep the train rolling in that direction
10 and keep pushing and working with School Food to
11 improve the health content, but I don't know that
12 we're able to get ingredient information or more
13 specific nutritional quality information from DOE
14 School Food at this time specifically about what's
15 actually being served. And I know some schools
16 actually have School Food Plus and are actually
17 getting somewhat healthier and maybe tastier food
18 in some schools than others, so...

19 MATTHEW NULTY: So I think--this
20 is, once again, Matthew Nulty--I think the
21 standards are set by the USDA in terms of food
22 groups, obviously, and I think that the
23 information on what they've been doing to improve
24 the nutritional quality should be available from
25 School Food. Having spent time there interning

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2 myself, they keep very good records of the types
3 of foods that they're working with, they have a
4 test lab, they have products coming in continually
5 with nutrition facts labels, so they have a very
6 strong hold on how they're trying to maintain the
7 nutritional quality and what things that are
8 increasing, such as the fiber, the vitamin
9 content. So that data should be available through
10 School Food and I, of course, don't have it on me
11 right now because I don't work there, but
12 someone's...

13 MARK DUNLEA: Well this is Mark
14 Dunlea, I wanted to speak to one of your earlier
15 questions. I mentioned earlier back in '93 we
16 passed a school breakfast mandate statewide,
17 actually, that mandate was for if you already
18 participated in the federal school lunch program,
19 if you were in elementary school, or if you were a
20 low income middle school or high school, so in
21 terms of having that distinction, you already have
22 it. And they actually did provide for a waiver
23 situation which personally I'm not opposed to. If
24 the waiver is a real waiver, if a waiver if a
25 school comes in and says this is why we think we

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2 can do a better job feeding our kids rather than
3 the Breakfast in the Classroom program, I'm open
4 to that way, not I'm just lazy enough to do it.

5 But one thing I always point out in
6 the 25 years or so, particularly in the state
7 legislature where I've been working on issues
8 related to child nutrition, always the strongest
9 opponent of trying to improve child nutrition in
10 the schools has been the school board associations
11 and the superintendents, and it's because the
12 principals much, much more so than teachers,
13 principals don't get the concept that actually
14 feeding children with a good nutritional breakfast
15 is part of the educational atmosphere you want to
16 create in order to improve their ability to learn.
17 And even four years ago, when we had a new
18 governor, Governor Spitzer, who put a lot of work
19 into trying to do a strong child student nutrition
20 bill, it was the only bill in the initial
21 leadership meetings that Senator Bruno, Assembly
22 Speaker Silver, and Governor Spitzer agreed to and
23 that bill was never enacted, despite it was being
24 something that they all agreed to, and a lot of it
25 was in opposition to the school board association.

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2 I can understand let's take a go
3 slow approach, but it seems like New York City has
4 done that and after five or six years of this go
5 slow approach, let's work with the individual
6 principals to educate them about the value of the
7 program, you're still the worse in the country and
8 I think at some point the needs of the children
9 have to be a little bit higher on the hierarchy of
10 who gets dealt with here. And we're not serving
11 our children well by not really expanding
12 participation of school breakfast.

13 JOEL BERG: If I may--

14 [Crosstalk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I just
16 don't think it's an either--oh, I wasn't saying
17 we--and I think that our need to continue to have
18 ambassadors amongst supportive principals and
19 teachers is part of building the support to make
20 this happen, I support the resolutions, I think we
21 should do it systemically, but obviously, if we're
22 confronting resistance, then we want to make sure
23 we're providing as much information and education
24 as possible.

25 JOEL BERG: If I may briefly answer

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2 your two questions, Chicago mandated this for all
3 schools, there was a little backlash in some of
4 the higher income neighborhood schools where the
5 parents complained we're feeding all our kids at
6 home, and so I suppose I would support, you know,
7 for schools with less than 30% free and reduced
8 price eligible, a handful of schools, if there are
9 one or two in Park Slope or Forest Hills, where we
10 knew for certain that the vast majority of parents
11 did have the economic resources to feed their kids
12 breakfast, I would exemption and, essentially,
13 that's what Chicago has quietly done.

14 [Pause]

15 And I would also say that I think
16 it's important to compare what kids are eating in
17 schools or in in-classroom breakfast, not to some
18 theoretical food guide pyramid, which is
19 important, but what they're eating in the real
20 world, what they're eating at home, an awful lot
21 of them we know are eating at the bodega or the
22 convenience store on the way to work. And if you
23 literally provide this to every kid in every
24 classroom or the vast majority of classrooms,
25 communicate to parents and said don't give them

1
2 extra money to provide at schools, the younger
3 kids are not going to be having that evil soda on
4 the way to school.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

6 JOEL BERG: I was paraphrasing you
7 know who.

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Council
9 Member Levin?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I just had
11 one quick question, I think, Mr. Berg, maybe you
12 could answer this. Could you just explain a
13 little bit about a couple of months ago the New
14 York City Department of Education put in a request
15 to the USDA for an exemption on some of the
16 calorie counts, right?

17 JOEL BERG: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Are you
19 familiar with--

20 JOEL BERG: Yeah, I--

21 [Crosstalk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: --this?
23 Just 'cause DOE is not actually testifying, I kind
24 of want to know if you could for the record--

25 JOEL BERG: Yeah.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: --know what
3 was going on there and what USDA's response was--

4 [Crosstalk]

5 JOEL BERG: [Interposing] We
6 honestly didn't make a big deal out of this
7 because we thought USDA would not accept and they
8 did not. New York City characterized it as a
9 waiver request when it was not, there was no
10 waiver authority, they were asking to violate
11 federal law. There were three components of their
12 request. One is instead of serving four required
13 elements, they would serve three; two is, instead
14 of having a minimum calorie count required by law,
15 they would have none; and the fourth was, instead
16 of serving juice, they would like to serve whole
17 fruit. Now the last request required no approval
18 by USDA, it's perfectly allowable under current
19 federal law and I'm betting virtually everyone
20 testifying today, if not everyone that's
21 testifying today, would support that 100%. They
22 should do it tomorrow, they claim they can't
23 afford it, honestly, the City has resources for
24 things it wants to do, we can serve fruit instead
25 of juice.

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2 And I think respectfully, that was
3 sort of a distraction to throw in something
4 they're allowed to do to ask for permission to do
5 things they're not allowed to do. USDA published
6 its regulations and had interim regulations and
7 comments. There is this issue over the minimum
8 calorie count, it was reduced by the new child
9 nutrition law, but there was a minimum. A few
10 people commented out of a few thousand comments
11 that the minimum should be higher, a few said it's
12 about right, one out of a few thousand comments
13 said there should be no minimum calorie count.
14 And so out of a thousand people--School Food
15 service authorities, nutritionists, government
16 people, advocates--one out of a few thousand
17 experts took the position of New York City that no
18 minimum calories are required whatsoever. I
19 really think they view food as sort of like the
20 Jetsons, it's just like a pill that's a nutrition
21 delivery system, not understanding that
22 occasionally people like actually enjoying eating
23 food.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. Thank
25 you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well let me thank the panel for coming in and expressing their viewpoints and facts about this particular matter. But, Mr. Nulty, do you have a copy of your testimony?

MATTHEW NULTY: I do, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Sergeant, could we have that?

MATTHEW NULTY: Yes, of course.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Sergeant. Thank you very much. And, Sergeant, if you don't mind, if you could have someone--Jen or Joan--could you make copies for the members, if you don't mind?

Thank you very much. Our next panel is--

FEMALE VOICE: Triada Stampas.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Triada Stampas from Food Bank NYC--

FEMALE VOICE: And Louise--

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: --and Louise Feld, Citizen's Committee for Children, please come forward.

[Long pause]

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CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Okay. Okay.

You may begin your testimony.

TRIADA STAMPAS: Great. Thank you, Chairperson Jackson, Council Member Levin, Members of the Education Committee, my name is Triada Stampas, I'm Senior Director of Government Relations at the Food Bank for New York City. And I do want to thank you for taking the time to hear this issue at a particularly busy time of the year, I know that there are many pressing matters before you as we speak, so I appreciate the time that you're making to learn more about this and to take action on school breakfast.

And I appreciate the questions that were asked to the previous panel. I will summarize my testimony and not really belabor what's already been said.

The Food Bank for New York City, as many of you know, provides food to emergency food programs, provides income support programs, and nutrition education, but I think most relevant to today's hearing topic, we convene the City's School Meals Coalition. It is a multi-stakeholder group that works together to expand access to free

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2 school meals. It includes the Office of School
3 Food, it includes the Mayor's Food Policy
4 Coordinator, it includes every union that
5 represents school employees from the Council of
6 School Supervisors and Administrators to the UFT
7 and DC 37 Local 372, as well as anti-hunger and
8 child welfare advocates. And so we have made
9 great strides in coordinating efforts to expand
10 access to free school meals. And you have one of
11 the handouts distributed to you today is a
12 memorandum in support of the two resolutions from
13 a number of the organizations in the School Meals
14 Coalition. But I am here to tell you today that
15 the efforts of the School Meals Coalition and the
16 efforts of a collective of mainly nonprofit
17 advocates and service providers are not enough to
18 expand access to Breakfast in the Classroom.

19 Child hunger, the question was
20 asked before do we know how many kids are eating
21 breakfast at home. The answer, truthfully, is no,
22 we also don't know how many students are skipping
23 breakfast. The data for that doesn't exist and
24 the truth of the matter is that child hunger is
25 often invisible even to the adults who interact

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2 with children on a daily basis. We have done
3 outreach to countless schools where we have heard
4 principals and teachers admit that they don't know
5 how many students are walking into their
6 classrooms not having had a breakfast. And the
7 one example that I carry with me and remind myself
8 and use as a reminder of this is, a few years ago,
9 P.S. 241 in Crown Heights in Brooklyn organized
10 letters to Santa and the letters that the grade
11 school students produced ended up horrifying the
12 adults in the school because, instead of getting
13 letters asking for brand name clothing or sneakers
14 or electronics and games, what a number of the
15 students ended up writing about was the need in
16 their homes and in their families. And I'm going
17 to quote from one letter 'cause it's particularly
18 relevant. This child wrote: I need food. I need
19 us not to starve every morning. I just can't take
20 it anymore. Me and my family are hungry.

21 So as you consider expanding
22 Breakfast in the Classroom and making sure that
23 every kid gets a nutritious meal in front of them
24 every morning, think about that.

25 The need is there. More than half

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2 of low income households with children in New York
3 City say they struggle to afford needed food.
4 That is significantly more than the citywide
5 average. They are also more likely to forego
6 purchases of healthy food at home in order to save
7 food or money. So they are less--low income
8 households with children are less likely to buy
9 fresh fruits and vegetables in particular than the
10 citywide average. So the nutritious balanced
11 meals that children are getting in the school are
12 an irreplaceable lifeline.

13 The city has made progress, and I
14 do want to give credit where it's due. We started
15 out strong in 2003, 2004, that school year, the
16 Mayor announced that all school breakfasts would
17 be free and universal. In 2007, the City
18 announced a goal of 300 schools to participate in
19 Breakfast in the Classroom. Well we've hit that
20 goal and since then, we've stalled. Right now, a
21 collective of nonprofits are working together to
22 try to coordinate their limited resources to
23 continue to do outreach to schools so that
24 principals can decide to do Breakfast in the
25 Classroom, but without the kind of institutional

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2 support that these two resolutions call for, we're
3 just not going to do it, not in the way that New
4 York City schoolchildren deserve.

5 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

6 Next, please.

7 LOUISE FELD: Good afternoon, my
8 name is Louise Feld and I'm the Policy Associate
9 for Food and Economic Security at Citizens'
10 Committee for Children. CCC is a multi-issue
11 child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring
12 that every New York child is healthy, housed,
13 educated, and safe. We're also very glad to be
14 members of the School Meals Coalition.

15 I want to thank you, Chair Jackson,
16 and the Committee for holding this hearing, during
17 budget season no less. Would also like to thank
18 Councilman Levin for his strong support of
19 Breakfast in Classroom and sponsoring these
20 resolutions. And we really do have a hearty
21 thanks for the entire Council for their continued
22 commitment to trying to help children and families
23 in New York City access healthy, affordable foods.
24 Submitted written testimony so I'll try and be
25 brief. And also I have to adopt so many of the

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2 statements that my colleagues on the previous
3 panel and also Ms. Stampas have made 'cause really
4 so much of it is already echoed in our testimony.

5 We do strongly, strongly support
6 the resolutions here today. We feel that
7 guaranteeing that children can access a healthy
8 breakfast, the need has never been more pressing.
9 Some of the statistics we've already heard,
10 certainly emphasize, underscore that need. I can
11 add a few more. Recently, New York City has found
12 that a child poverty rate has reached 30%--that's
13 one in three children in New York City--we know
14 that 30% of families with children are receiving
15 food stamps, and we know that about three-quarters
16 of our over 1 million students are living in
17 households with incomes that qualify them for free
18 or reduced price meals. So with all this need and
19 despite the fact that meals--breakfast is free for
20 every child in New York City, we are incredibly
21 troubled by the low participation rate, which has
22 already been discussed from the FRAC report, but
23 also our own research bears this out.

24 So we've attached to our testimony
25 a copy of a report that we released in May. We

1 surveyed about 100 parents in New York City,
2 specifically in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and
3 Manhattan. We really tried to get their opinions
4 of the school breakfast program and the sort of
5 like how and how often and where their children
6 eat breakfast. We asked them about from the day
7 of the survey, the previous school week, how often
8 did your children eat breakfast, was it every day,
9 a full quarter answered that, despite they knew
10 that the fact that breakfast was important and how
11 much it contributed to their children's health and
12 academic, their academic achievement, a full
13 quarter said their children had not eaten
14 breakfast every day in that past week. On top of
15 that, of the parents we surveyed, only about 20%,
16 just over 20%, said that their children ate
17 breakfast at school every day.

18
19 So we know that children aren't
20 participating, we know it from national studies,
21 we know it from our own qualitative research on
22 the street, we also know how important breakfast
23 is, and so something like Breakfast in Classroom,
24 which all the research shows is proven to increase
25 participation should absolutely garner the support

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of advocates. We're so glad the Council gives it our support.

We did add a couple of recommendations that seemed to be--in our report that seemed to be echoed in the resolutions and we're very pleased about that. Specifically, one is sort of targeting to begin expanding the program in those areas with the highest need, looking at places where there are the highest number of children who are free or reduced price eligible to start trying to institute, if it's not already there, or expand if it's already there the program in those neighborhoods.

We also did recommend that there be increased parent outreach and education so that parents really know what's available to them, what they can be advocating for, and also can make more informed decisions about what their children are eating.

I do want to add two quick points that stem from some of the questions and conversation before about the idea of children eating breakfast in more than one place on the same morning. I don't call it double

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2 breakfasting, and that leads to my first point,
3 it's because we don't actually know that two full
4 breakfasts are being eaten. I'm unaware and I
5 challenge someone to find a study that actually
6 shows that if children are eating in more than one
7 location they're over-consuming calories or
8 they're eating things that actually qualify as two
9 full meals. It's quite possible that a child is
10 eating a piece of toast at home and then eating a
11 well-rounded meal when they get to school. There
12 is no evidence out there that I am aware of that
13 actually disputes that.

14 The second thing is that there are
15 studies out there and one is cited in our report,
16 I believe it's from the Journal of the American
17 Medical Association, that says that sometimes
18 people overeat because food is scarce. We know
19 that sometimes children who are not--who might be
20 getting meager food at home or might know that
21 they're having consistent access to food the next
22 day, might eat more in one place.

23 So I think we need to also debunk a
24 little bit more what these eating in more than one
25 place, sort of, objections are before we begin to

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2 say that we shouldn't offer something that would
3 increase children's breakfast participation
4 because it might lead to them eating something,
5 you know, twice in one morning.

6 So, you know, in sum, we're really
7 pleased to support these resolutions and we would
8 love to continue to work with our colleagues in
9 the Council to continue to support and expand
10 Breakfast in Classroom.

11 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.
12 We've been joined by our colleague Margaret Chin
13 of Manhattan. Let me turn to our colleague
14 Council Member Levin for questions.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Oh,
16 actually, I just wanted to thank both of you for
17 convening--thank you, Mr. Chairman--the School
18 Food Coalition because we, as you're aware, we had
19 a meeting yesterday that was, I thought, very
20 successful in terms of establishing the dialogue,
21 the brainstorming session. Having everybody in
22 the same room, even if we're not in total
23 agreement all the time, so that we can talk
24 through some of the issues, having School Food in
25 the room, I thought it was vitally important and

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2 so I just want to acknowledge that that's a good
3 venue and a really good first step towards kind of
4 redoubling the efforts as a city to address the
5 need. So I think I just want to thank you for
6 doing that because I think it's having a very good
7 effect and impact.

8 Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
9 Chairman.

10 TRIADA STAMPAS: Thank you for
11 that. I will say the Office of School Food has
12 been a really, a wonderfully willing partner in
13 this work, regardless of differences of opinion
14 about policy, they have consistently been
15 supportive of schools wanting to make the change
16 to Breakfast in the Classroom when we've
17 identified them, they have been consistently
18 willing to work with us and they've always kept
19 the avenues of dialogue open, so...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Mr.
21 Chairman, I just want to acknowledge Alyssa Weiss
22 from the Speaker's staff, Danielle Porcaro, and
23 Katy Cody [phonetic] have worked on this issue.
24 Thanks.

25 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Thank you.

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2 Thank you, ladies. Okay. Our next witness is
3 Agnes Molner, Community Food Advocates. Is there
4 anyone else wishing to testify today? Please
5 raise your hand. Thank you.

6 AGNES MOLNER: Good afternoon. Is
7 this on?

8 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Yes, the mic
9 is on. Just pull it a little closer to you.

10 AGNES MOLNER: Thank you. I'm
11 Agnes Molner from Community Food Advocates, and
12 I'm very pleased to be here. I just walked in, I
13 didn't expect to be able to testify right away,
14 so... And I did not have anything in writing 'cause
15 I wasn't sure I'd be able to make it.

16 But having been a long-term
17 advocate for 30 some odd years now for the School
18 Food program, we've seen everything. Let me just
19 say that we had to fight in the 1970s to get
20 breakfast in the schools at all. Principals said
21 no, not over my dead body. I mean, this is 1976,
22 we had to pass a state law to get breakfast in the
23 schools at all. They were resentful of even
24 feeding lunch to kids who couldn't go home for
25 lunch.

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2 So it was a long fight and I have
3 to say that we're still fighting that same battle
4 because we still have principals who don't want to
5 serve breakfast in their schools. The reason that
6 we're promoting Breakfast in the Classroom is to
7 overcome that, but they're still the obstacle.

8 There are many principals, I'm
9 sorry to say, that don't think that food is the
10 business--their business. They're there to
11 educate kids. Some of them understand, yes, you
12 have to educate a kid who's not hungry, but
13 they're not willing to go that next step and a lot
14 of--too many of them are ruled by the custodial
15 staff who say we don't want anything in the
16 buildings and don't bring food into the classroom.
17 On the other hand, if you've ever gone into a New
18 York City public school building, you will see the
19 wrappers of lots of food all over the building,
20 but not from the School Food program, but from
21 everything they bring in. So it's sort of not a
22 very good argument.

23 But we really feel that there has
24 to be some effort, not just from School Food
25 because they do a very good job, but the effort

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2 has to be on the pedagogical side. To support
3 this program, I have never seen the Mayor or the
4 Chancellor come out and make a strong statement in
5 favor of school meals and it's not just breakfast,
6 it's lunch as well and it's summer meals. We have
7 the most abysmal participation in the program and
8 I think it really needs a lot of support from all
9 of those players, not just School Food and not
10 just the advocates, it has to be from that whole
11 system, our whole New York City government.

12 So that is what I have to say.

13 Thank you very much.

14 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well thank
15 you, and surprise, surprise, you didn't expect to
16 make it, you made it; you didn't expect to
17 testify, you testified. You're changing the
18 world.

19 AGNES MOLNER: I only wish.

20 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well you are,
21 you are. So Council Member Lew Fidler.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I just I
23 wanted to make one comment for the record 'cause
24 like my still un-dilated eyes, I can still see
25 this pretty clearly. I got a letter yesterday

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2 from a principal at one of my elementary schools,
3 she was complaining about her school budget, and
4 the point--one of the points she was making in the
5 letter was that the school had just fallen below
6 the 60% reimbursement threshold but she still had
7 to feed the 54% that qualify for which she was
8 getting no money. So I think, you know, when the
9 Mayor suggests that a second breakfast or
10 Breakfast in the Classrooms contributes to
11 obesity, I think he's probably looking at the
12 beans again and, you know, the fact that they just
13 don't want to pay for it. And I think that this
14 is a question that--and I appreciate Councilman
15 Levin's resolution, I think this is a very
16 important, and I support it, but I think this is
17 once again where dollars are driving and not
18 policy, all right? Not what is right and wrong
19 and I think that the pressure that principals
20 feel, some of whom probably would be happy to
21 serve more Breakfast in the Classrooms, but their
22 budgets are being pressed at every possible way.
23 And, you know, I just got that graphic example,
24 and I'm sorry I don't have the letter with me
25 'cause if I had the letter with me, I would

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introduce it so it'd be part of the record so you could see that this is part of the problem and I think it's important that we address that.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Can I ask a question of that question?

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Of course you can.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Why would it cost more money to do it in the classroom than having it in the cafeteria, like how much more money are we talking? They have to do it in the cafeteria anyway.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: It's not a question of doing it in the cafeteria or doing it in the classroom, I guess if you're serving it in the classroom, everyone is getting it, right? You're serving more breakfasts.

COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Oh, I see.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Right, but-

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CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Go ahead.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Could I just add a point to that is that the actual cost of the meals, whether they're in the classroom or whether

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2 they're in the cafeteria, are covered by--are
3 federally reimbursable. So as a matter of fact,
4 the City of New York is foregoing about \$50
5 million per year in federal reimbursements, that's
6 for every kid whether they qualify for free or
7 reduced lunch or not, we have universal breakfast,
8 so everything is federally reimbursable. At a
9 certain point, I believe, and I mean, this is kind
10 of like doing a hypothetical exercise, we could
11 actually be making money in terms of federal
12 reimbursements if the enrollment is kind of right
13 where it needs to be, but it's entirely federally
14 reimbursable.

15 One thing I will say is that I did
16 speak to the school custodial union yesterday, and
17 they wanted to be here to testify, they have
18 raised concerns, I think that it's important if,
19 you know, if we do go more large scale than we are
20 now that the school custodial union is brought
21 into the conversation because there are costs
22 associated with things like lining all the paper
23 wastepaper baskets with trash bag liners. I mean,
24 there are costs that could be associated on the
25 custodial side of things, but on the actual food,

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you get it from the feds.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: If I could, I, you know, it's possible that I'm confusing the lunch formula with the breakfast issue, but I think it's all relevant. And my question, I guess--and unfortunately, DOE isn't here to answer the question, maybe someone here knows the answer--if we serve breakfast in every classroom, are the school budgets compensated for the increase in the number of breakfasts that are being served? That-

AGNES MOLNER: Can I answer?

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: --I think is something that principals are going to think about as they watch every paperclip.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Go ahead, answer.

AGNES MOLNER: Thank you, I'd like to answer that.

CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Just identify yourself again.

AGNES MOLNER: Agnes Molner, Community Food Advocates. Council Member Levin is correct, the breakfast program does not cost the

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2 principals any money, it does not go to their
3 budget. In New York City, breakfast has been free
4 to all students since 2003 and '4. And so the
5 principals, what you're talking about is, indeed,
6 the school lunch program, which for the first time
7 this year, School Food was told that they have to
8 bill the principals for meals that are served to
9 students who are not paying but should be paying
10 in those schools, and I know they have been
11 sending them bills, but I haven't heard of any
12 principals actually paying those yet.

13 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: That was for
14 lunch.

15 AGNES MOLNER: Yes, only lunch.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Only for
17 lunch.

18 AGNES MOLNER: Breakfast has been
19 free--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Everybody.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I stand--

22 AGNES MOLNER: --and are still
23 free--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: --I stand
25 corrected, but, you know, it's certainly relevant

1
2 on the lunch issue, I'll tell you that and it's--
3 as we go into the budget and everything is budget
4 this month, you know, that's a concern for me.

5 AGNES MOLNER: Yeah, could I make a
6 comment on that too? Because I think that that's
7 a terrible way for the City to operate, to ask the
8 schools to take money out of their education
9 budget to pay for lunch for students who can't pay
10 for it and don't have an application on file,
11 which is why we have been pushing for the last 20
12 years for universal lunch for all kids just like
13 breakfast. I mean, is really--we can afford it
14 and we should be going in that direction. Thank
15 you.

16 CHAIRPERSON JACKSON: Well thank
17 you. We've been joined by our colleague Dan
18 Garodnick. As I indicated to you earlier, we had
19 budget delegation meetings and Dan co-chairs the
20 Manhattan delegation, but he's joined us.

21 So hearing no further witnesses,
22 this hearing on Resolution number 910-A and 911-A
23 regarding breakfast in the schools, in the
24 classrooms is hereby adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

25 [Gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tammy Wittman, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature *Tammy Wittman*

Date July 12, 2012